

July 19, 2001

**FIX THE CORE PROBLEMS WITH H.R. 7
VOTE "YES" ON THE RANGEL-CONYERS-FRANK-NADLER-EDWARDS--SCOTT
DEMOCRATIC SUBSTITUTE**

Dear Colleague:

When H.R. 7, the Charitable Choice bill, comes up today, we plan to offer a substitute amendment which eliminates the most objectionable provisions from H.R. 7.

First, the Substitute prohibits any religious organization that receives taxpayer dollars from discriminating in employment on the basis of religion and specifies that state and local civil rights laws are not superseded by the bill. As it is presently drafted, H.R. 7 permits the use of taxpayer funds to fund employment discrimination. By taking the religious exemption to the civil rights laws and extending it to charitable choice -- as this bill does -- we will be saying it is acceptable to take federal funds and openly discriminate against Catholics and Jews, against gays and lesbians, against divorced persons, against unmarried pregnant women, and even against individuals married to a member of another race. The bill not only sets aside federal civil rights laws, it goes so far as to obviate state and local civil rights protections.

Second, the substitute pays for the tax cut in the bill to avoid raiding the Social Security and Medicare trust funds. The substitute slightly lowers the recent reduction in the Tax Code's top rate, which applies to the top 1% of earners, to pay for the bill's \$13 billion in tax benefits. As it presently stands, the tax cuts, while well intentioned, are unpaid for. This means they are likely to invade the Social Security and Medicare trust funds or result in deficit spending.

Third, the Substitute guarantees that proselytization does not occur at the same time and place as a government funded program. Although the bill includes provisions intended to insure that proselytizing is not funded by government and is voluntary, nowhere does it guarantee that secular social services and proselytizing will not occur at the same time. This safeguard is vital if we are to assure that young children participating in after school programs do not face undue religious pressure.

Fourth, the Substitute deletes the sweeping new provision in H.R. 7 permitting agencies to convert more than \$78 billion in government programs into private vouchers. Buried deep in the fine print is a sweeping and unprecedented new provision converting every social program covered by the bill into private vouchers. In one fell swoop, the bill grants federal agencies unilateral authority to take every dollar we spend on housing, hunger, juvenile justice - even money we spend on education - and dismantle the federal program to create a voucher program. Even worse, the bill's religious safeguards do not apply to these "voucherized" programs.

Fifth, the Substitute insulates from liability companies whose equipment has killed or injured individuals receiving assistance from religious organizations. Title IV of the bill would eliminate accountability for all business entities for damages negligently caused by the planes, cars, buses, equipment, and facilities they donate or lease to charities. This would unilaterally preempt state law and expose the most vulnerable members of our society to greater risk of harm.

The substitute corrects the most significant deficiencies in H.R. 7. **We urge you to vote “YES” on the Rangel-Conyers-Frank-Nadler-Edwards-Scott amendment.**

Sincerely,

s/Charles B. Rangel
Member of Congress

s/John Conyers, Jr.
Member of Congress

s/Barney Frank
Member of Congress

s/Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress

s/Chet Edwards
Member of Congress

s/Robert C. Scott
Member of Congress